

Force Provider . . .

SUPPORTING THE FORCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Introduction

"Thanks, Force Provider," said MSG Kim Almandi, Operations Non-commissioned Officer in Charge for the 507th Corps Support Group. She expressed this sentiment to a Product Manager, Force Sustainment Systems (PM, FSS) team that traveled to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in March 2002 to ensure that Force Provider (FP) systems deployed to support Operation Enduring Freedom were providing quality support to U.S. forces prosecuting the war on terrorism.

FP is a readily deployable, containerized, and pre-packed base camp developed by the Army between 1992 and 1994. Using modern, environmentally controlled configurations of tents and containerized systems, each FP module can support approximately 550 soldiers. Offering quality-of-life amenities not normally found in the field, it has been supporting soldiers serving around the world since July 1994, when it first deployed to Grand Turks Island during the preparation for military intervention in Haiti. Since then, FP has served in military operations in Cuba, the Balkans, Guatemala, and Honduras.

The roots of FP can be traced to the Saudi Arabian desert during Operation Desert Shield. During the prewar buildup, there was a noticeable disparity between U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force (USAF) living conditions. USAF personnel lived in air-conditioned TEMPER (tent, extendable, modular, personal) accommodations, had onsite personal laundry services, quality food-service facilities, hot showers, and flushing latrines. Meanwhile, the Army lived in general-purpose tents developed during the 1950s, which had no windows, and used makeshift showers and slit-trench latrines. The Army and USAF facilities were often collocated, and the juxtaposition of living quality was not lost on Army leadership.

Thus, in July 1991, then Army Chief of Staff GEN Gordon R. Sullivan directed the Army to develop a system to take care of soldiers in the field. Using something akin to today's "spiral development," the FP team devised a DOD award-winning approach that leveraged the USAF's experience and equipment and tailored it to Army doctrine. Moreover, it accelerated production by 2 years using nondevelopmental items and existing Army pre-positioned stock

and assembled these items into FP modules.

Nearly 8 years after its first deployment, FP is helping to project forces farther into the battle than ever before. In November 2001, the Army began deploying FP modules in Uzbekistan to project and support coalition forces. Today, 13 FP modules are set up alongside comparable USAF facilities, serving multiple roles as forward operating base camps, intermediate staging bases, and for in-theater reception. Nearly 8,000 soldiers are being housed between the camps, and more deployments are in progress.

Centralized Management

FP is managed by PM, FSS, an element of Project Manager, Force Projection within the Program Executive Office for Combat Support and Combat Service Support (PEO, CS&CSS). As the system life-cycle manager, PM, FSS continually seeks new ways to support unified commands with better equipment that can arrive and be operational faster than ever before.

FP is an important component of how PM, FSS supports Project Manager, Force Projection's vision of being the preferred provider of sys-

tems that move and sustain today's transforming Army. With its systems that can be rapidly deployed by air, sea, or land, and then rapidly employed once delivered in-theater, FP improves the Army's combat capability by providing a strategic force-projection presence while providing soldiers a greatly improved quality of life. These improved conditions boost morale, which in turn allows warfighters to be better prepared to execute their missions. This vision has played itself out well in Operation Enduring Freedom.

When deployed, FP uses and is dependent on a multitude of CS&CSS equipment, to include power generation, water purification and delivery systems, materiel handling equipment, tactical vehicles, and Army watercraft. The recent stand-up of PEO, CS&CSS aligned the product managers of the above systems under a single umbrella that allows for close communication, collaboration, and synchronization of efforts resulting in a better end product that meets the Army's requirements.

Tent Cities

Among the wide variety of rapidly deployable systems that make up FP are air-conditioned or heated tents, hot showers, a full-service kitchen, laundry service, and flushing toilets. Other amenities include recreation such as basketball, table tennis, and satellite television. Each module also offers a chapel and contains space for a small medical facility for use by the visiting unit's staff. Currently, 32 of 36 planned modules exist, more than half of which are currently deployed.

FP is maintained as an Operational Project Stock (OPPROJ) item, managed by the Army Materiel Command. As an OPPROJ item, FP can



Bunk tent

only be authorized for release to the commander of a unified command. The Army uses a single Active component company headquarters (488th Quartermaster (QM) Co.) and one platoon (488th QM PLT) to support FP missions. Five additional Reserve platoons are war-traced to the 488th to provide a full-strength company. At full strength, one company can support six FP modules. Another five FP companies exist in the Army Reserve as Type B units, meaning they must be supplemented with contractor or equivalent Army military occupational specialty personnel to support any modules. The units train at the Force Provider Training and Test Facility, Fort Polk,

LA. Located there is a single FP module that serves as an active staging base for Army units entering and departing their Joint Readiness Training Center rotations, thus providing real-world training scenarios for units.

Supporting The Force

After September 11th, 2001, the Army was called on to work jointly with the USAF and the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to provide CS and CSS to operations in and around Afghanistan.

In October 2001, the Army began to deploy, set up, and operate OCONUS-based FP modules in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. In November 2001, four FP modules were in transit to the theater of operations. By the end of December 2001, these modules were established and provided an early-entry capability that served as the first forward base camp facility to directly support air and ground combat operations inside Afghanistan.

The FP modules were employed at two sites. Site 1, in Uzbekistan, was operated by the Army and provided support to USSOCOM, Army, and coalition forces. Site 2, in Kyrgyzstan, was set up and operated by USAF



Tent layout

personnel strictly for airfield operations. In May 2002, five additional modules were deployed into Afghanistan. By June 2002, these were set up near Kandahar, housing soldiers directly engaged in continuing combat operations inside Afghanistan.

FP has proven to be extremely flexible given the changing conditions. Originally conceived as a rear-area rest and refit facility, it is now a relevant combat multiplier being used as a forward-deployed system that increases combat capabilities by providing superior living conditions beyond that ever experienced by soldiers. Clearly, the ongoing combat operations are extremely demanding, and the Army's ability to bring superior living conditions to the soldier (versus bringing the soldier to the facilities) improves recovery time and makes for a more effective combat soldier.

Foresight Pays Off

From lessons learned in earlier deployments to Haiti, Cuba, and Bosnia, the PM routinely sent staff engineers and technicians to assist the troops on the ground in deployment and initial operation of the camps. Recognizing that a dedicated team would be more beneficial to supporting the ever-increasing frequency of deployments, the PM put plans in place during early 2001 to ensure that a team of specialists was hired, trained, and ready to deploy the next time FP was called forward. Nobody envisioned FP would be called into action so rapidly. However, the foresight by PM, FSS is paying great dividends following post-September 11 activities.

PM, FSS initiated a technical assistance team (TAT) in late 2001, just in time for deployment to Central Asia, where the team toiled alongside Army and USAF personnel to quickly set up both sites. The PM,



**Weight
room
tent**

FSS TAT will continue to coordinate with gaining units to collectively develop a plan for setting up, operating, and maintaining FP during Operation Enduring Freedom. An additional benefit of the PM, FSS TAT is that it allows lessons learned to be carried from one deployment to the next, continually improving the process and, therefore, the support to the soldiers.

Future Focus

The PM, FSS vision is to lead the Army's transformation efforts in the force sustainment arena, and FP will play a vital role in achieving that vision. The FP team will continue to enhance and sustain the warfighter's capability by reducing its logistics footprint while providing effective and efficient support systems.

Conclusion

From the cold winter temperatures of Kyrgyzstan to the more than 120-degree temperatures in Kandahar, Force Provider—and its wide-ranging support from PEO, CS&CSS equipment—has been supporting the force at unprecedented levels. Recently, the 82nd Airborne Division moved into the FP facilities near Kandahar. According to a July 28, 2002, report in the *Stars and Stripes European Edition*, the 82nd's soldiers

expected to encounter poor living conditions; however, they were surprised by the high quality of life FP offered and the ability it gave them to conduct their missions at the highest level. Could anything else better describe the impact that PEO, CS&CSS, and FP has on the war?

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